



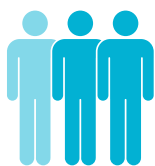
Corbion

# 2026 *Listeria* regulation updates: Count on Corbion to keep you compliant

Discover what you can do now to prepare for tighter *Listeria* regulations, and how our support and solutions can help you face the change with confidence.

## Convenient, yet complex: The RTE food market

Ready-to-eat (RTE) foods are loved by consumers worldwide for their 'grab-and-go' convenience. Across Europe, 54% of all shoppers purchase RTE meals and snacks at least once a month<sup>1</sup>. But in tandem with rising RTE food consumption, there is a concerning uptick in *Listeriosis* cases<sup>2</sup>.



In 2023 alone there were:

**2,952** reported cases  
**1,497** hospitalizations  
**335** deaths

The risk of contamination remains especially high in chilled RTE food products that are not heated after packaging. This is because *Listeria* bacteria are resistant to many common preservation methods, such as salting or smoking, and can even grow at low refrigerated temperatures - making *Listeria* a serious threat for RTE Food Business Operators (FBOs). Spurred on by growing concerns, the European Commission has raised its standards for RTE food production even higher.

## Then vs now: The updated criteria for *Listeria*<sup>3</sup>

The changes to Regulation 2073/2005 apply to RTE food products that are able to support the growth of *Listeria monocytogenes* (Category 1.2):

Existing regulation (Reg. 2073/2005—up to June 30, 2026)	Updated regulation (Reg. 2024/2895—from July 1, 2026)
The Food Business Operator (FBO) must demonstrate that the pathogen will not exceed 100 colony-forming units per gram (cfu/g) throughout the product's shelf life. If it can not do so, the criterion of "not detected <i>L. monocytogenes</i> in 25g" applies.	
The absence of <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> must be proven in 25 grams of product before the food product has left the immediate control of the producing FBO.	The absence of <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> must be proven in 25 grams for products placed on the market <b>during their entire shelf life, not just before leaving the immediate control of the FBO.</b>
By the end of the product's shelf life, <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> must not exceed 100 colony-forming units per gram (100 cfu/g).	

The new rules will apply across all European Union member states. Failure to meet microbiological criteria will trigger mandatory corrective actions.

**To avoid unnecessary risks and disruption, manufacturers must act now to ensure success under the new standards.**

## Taking action: The core routes to compliance

There are two clear ways to prepare for the introduction of the amended regulation:

✗ Shortening shelf life to ensure compliance, but in the process potentially increasing food waste and decreasing consumer appeal.

✓ Adapting formulations and processes to inhibit *Listeria* growth right from the start, using protective ingredients, optimized hygiene practices, improved packaging and hurdle technologies.

**While both are viable strategies, option 2 offers a more future-proof approach to protecting consumer safety while preserving on-shelf appeal.**

### Verdad®: Your solution for safety-first formulation

Corbion's range of Verdad® vinegars offers a unique blend of safety and shelf life extension, tailored to your specific requirements, alongside label-friendliness. As a mild, natural form of concentrated acetic acid, Verdad® delivers antimicrobial efficiency that is buffered to a lightly acidic pH to avoid any compromise to flavor or texture. The result? Safe, delicious products for happier consumers.

With our support, RTE brands can even upgrade their products from Category 1.2 (able to support the growth of *Listeria monocytogenes*) to Category 1.3 (unable to support pathogen growth), which is recognized as a higher standard in *Listeria* control and food safety.

### Get the upper hand on the legislation updates with Corbion

We are proud to offer an extensive range of preservation and pathogen control solutions, including our predictive Corbion *Listeria* Control Model (CLCM). This easy-to-use, proprietary online tool predicts *Listeria* growth over time based on your specific product characteristics and parameters, allowing the risks of potential pathogen growth to be assessed *before* product development begins.

The CLCM also compares the predicted efficacy of different Corbion solutions, so you can quickly identify the optimal solution for your product in a fraction of the time.

### Why choose Corbion as your partner for pathogen control?

Corbion champions preservation in all its forms – and delivers sustainable solutions that preserve food, food production and our planet. By focusing on Sustainable Development Goals 2 (Zero hunger), 3 (Good health and wellbeing) and 12 (Responsible consumption and production), our Advance 2025 strategy ensures we work to make a real, tangible difference in preserving our planet.

### When it comes to adaptive *Listeria* control, you can count on Corbion.

Connect with our experts, request free samples of our innovative ingredient solutions and explore our full range of RTE food solutions at:

[www.corbion.com/markets/food/refrigerated-foods](http://www.corbion.com/markets/food/refrigerated-foods)

### We preserve what matters

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<sup>1</sup> McKinsey Consumer Survey 2025, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/state-of-grocery-europe-report#readytoheat> ).

<sup>2</sup> EFSA and ECDC (European Food Safety Authority and European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control), (2024). The European Union One Health 2023 Zoonoses report. EFSA Journal, 22(12), e9106. <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2024.9106>

<sup>3</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 of 15 November 2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs [2005] OJ L338/1 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32005R2073> (accessed 3 July 2025).

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